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SUBJECT: BACK TO THE FUTURE: ANDRZEJ LEPPER RETURNS TO
GOVERNMENT

REF: WARSAW 2166 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Mary T. Curtin for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: In a late night meeting October 16, away from the glare of the press, Andrzej Lepper and his Self-Defense (SO) party returned to the coalition government led by Law and Justice (PiS) PM Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who had dumped Lepper a scant four weeks ago. Lepper was restored to his positions of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture. His colleague, Anna Kalata, will return to the Ministry of Labor, and SO will name the Minister of Construction. The agreement was done behind closed doors and the terms of the agreed government program had, by late October 17, not yet been published. The restored coalition was met with derision by commentators and snap opinion polls, and the month long "crisis" seriously damaged PiS's and the Kaczynskis' public standing. While many commentators and over 70% of those polled believe the newly reformulated coalition will last several months or shorter, others think PiS will remain in government much longer and they will avoid elections as their popularity drops. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Lepper's return to the coalition ends a month long political circus that started when PM Kaczynski ejected him and his party from the coalition in what many thought was a prelude to early elections, and a bid by the Kaczynskis to strengthen their position. The plan backfired, and PiS is now seen as considerably weaker, with its poll ratings dropping behind center right rivals Civic Platform (PO). The immediate result of the restoration of the coalition, however tenuous it may prove, was that the governing parties easily defeated two opposition motions to dissolve Parliament (Sejm), in October 17 votes that fell along party lines. But, while PiS insider Adam Lopinski declared the "end of the political crisis," PiS has been hurt by the drama, and many think it unlikely the restored coalition will be any more stable or harmonious than before. Tabloid Super Express headlined altered photos of the three coalition party leaders -- Kaczynski, Lepper and League of Polish Families' (LPR) Roman Giertych -- as bruised and beaten up under a headline "Coalition after the Storm."

3. (SBU) There is also criticism over the manner in which the parties came to agreement--behind closed doors--and the fact that the details of the new arrangement between the coalition parties have not been released. What is known is that, along with Lepper's return, PiS has agreed to place a new Secretary of State in the PM's Chancellery from each of the coalition parties to manage relations better. While the Kaczynskis are unlikely to cede real power to these appointees, it means that SO and LPR will now sit in the chancellery, gaining them the prestige they have been seeking. (Note: The LPR designee is Wojciech Wierzejski, former leader of the fascistic and anti-Semitic All Poland Youth. End Note)

¶4. (U) Even with the bitter medicine of inviting Lepper back, PM Kaczynski falls one deputy short of a majority in the Sejm, owing to the defection October 16 of SO deputy Henryk Mlynarczyk to the "National Peasants Caucus," which now counts sixteen former SO and LPR deputies, some of whom defected from their parties at PiS's bidding after Lepper was ejected from the coalition. Not surprisingly, Lepper and Giertych insisted that their renegade party members not be included in the reformulated coalition, another defeat for PiS. In order to gain a majority on any proposed legislation, PiS will need to bring along members of this new caucus to assure enough votes, another factor that may impede implementation of its programs.

¶5. (C) Comment: Lepper emerges from the past month's political fracas in a stronger position, fully restored to his previous power base within the GOP and emboldened. We fully expect Lepper to continue to be a thorn in the Kaczynski brothers' sides. Last night he referred to President Lech Kaczynski as "the notary public," for his role in brokering the coalition. Moreover, he deflected the Kaczynskis' efforts to preclude SO deputy Renata Beger, whose secretly taped conversations with PiS officials provoked a

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full-blown political crisis for PiS. By contrast, PM Kaczynski (and President Lech Kaczynski) and PiS have lost considerable credibility by kicking Lepper out, only to bring him back on bended knee. The re-constitution of the coalition does not assure stability in the government coalition, but elections are staved off for some time. What remains to be seen is whether PiS can move forward with any of its reform agenda in its weakened position. End Comment.
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